

NSC BRIEFING

19 January 1955
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V. Whenever Soviets obviously busy at ambitious diplomacy

and policy-making on tough issues like West German rearmament, US intelligence studies every scrap evidence of possible strains on stability regime.

A. "Straws in wind"--appearing with increasing frequency--suggest that all is not close harmony in Soviet "collective leadership."

1. Publicity accorded Party First Secretary Khrushchev strikingly preferential during past months.

2. Khrushchev, rather than Premier Malenkov, has made the official pronouncements on:

(a) Soviet agricultural expansion, including "new lands" program and manpower allocated to program.

(b) Lagging construction program.

(c) Anti-religious activities.

3. Khrushchev also active in foreign affairs.

(a) Attended Czech and Polish party congresses in '54.

(b) Led unprecedentedly high-level delegation to Peiping.

(c) Shows no hesitation in talking to diplomats and foreign visitors, even to disgruntlement of Foreign Minister Molotov. In contrast to earlier confident behavior, Molotov has been described as "glacial" when his fellow leaders were talking with Westerners on foreign affairs.

4. Khrushchev also benefiting from factory-made retroactive history, identifying him intimately with hallowed leadership of past:
 - (a) Press listings include Khrushchev among Lenin's "closest associates" during civil war period (untrue.)
 - (b) Also include him among prominent Central Committee members sent directly to war work during World War (true, but lists do not include Malenkov, whose prominence actually was greater).
 - (c) Khrushchev is first Presidium member to boast of close and influential connections with Stalin (7 January Komsomol meeting).
 - (d) Signed Central Committee decree changing date of annual Lenin celebration (tends to associate Khrushchev in eyes of Soviet people both with new holiday and with revered leader).
5. Malenkov, in contrast, has made no major policy pronouncement since last Supreme Soviet session (April '54). Even then, Khrushchev got equal treatment.
 - (a) Malenkov's New Year answers to US News Agency's questions--only individual publicity during '54--played down by Soviet propaganda as compared with previous year.

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B. Foreign observers in Moscow, however, unanimous in stating Malenkov seems top dog of group when leaders appear together at diplomatic functions.

1. Attlee delegation last summer agreed Malenkov was "first among equals."
2. Following November Revolution celebration, Ambassador Bohlen commented: "two most important men...are Malenkov and Khrushchev, in that order."

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- C. Preservation of "collective" probably still priority interest of top leaders as matter self-preservation.
1. "Collective" has been successful, in past, in "regulating" conduct of Beria and--in less severe degree--conduct of Malenkov and Khrushchev, themselves.
 - (a) Immediately after Stalin's death, Malenkov relinquished post as Party First Secretary and his propaganda was cut down.
 - (b) As late as June '54, Khrushchev's propaganda buildup, which had reached peak, dropped sharply. Not resumed until Sept '54.

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2. "Collective" probably able to impose its will when necessary and Khrushchev may again be forced to forego personal propaganda buildup.
- D. "Straws in wind" may not show trouble ahead but only reflect difference between present regime and Stalin's.
1. Under Stalin, attempts at "empire building" by subordinates would be dealt with immediately and drastically.
 2. In contrast, present regime seems willing to let maneuvering this kind go on for time in hopes situation will correct itself over period of time.
 3. Heads roll only when crisis cannot be avoided and even then comparatively few men are liquidated.
 4. Apparent greater leeway for individual action could be source of strength and better Soviet decision-making.
 5. In any case, dangerous expect serious dislocations of government or Soviet policy-making on basis of signs of maneuvering within leadership.

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